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THE MEANING AND VALUE OF RELIGION

BY

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MEANING AND VALUE OF RELIGION

EDITOR'S NOTE

Each writer is responsible for the views expressed in his contribution to the series. No attempt has been made to limit freedom in the effort to impose an artificial uniformity. Yet a certain unity of outlook does make itself evident, and this is all the more valuable because unforced.

RAYMOND V. HOLT

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SYNOPSIS

THE MEANING AND VALUE OF RELIGION

CHAPTER I

THE MODERN CHALLENGE TO RELIGION

YEARS ago religion was commonly taken for granted as a basic fact in human life. People no more dreamed of questioning the necessity of religion and its prevailing forms of expression in life and thought than they dreamed of questioning the necessity of society and the state. To-day the position is radically changed. We live in an age when men are less and less disposed to take for granted the ideas and habits, the customs and institutions of the past—an age when, more and more, ideas, beliefs, customs, institutions, which have been handed down from former times are being challenged and changed. In nothing is this more evident than in the matter of religion. On all hands we see signs of the growing alienation of great masses of people from organised religion. This tendency, while it is, of course, more pronounced in some countries than in others, is common to the whole Western world. And it is by no means confined to the West. In the East, likewise, the growing movement of modern culture and enlightenment is accompanied by an increasing revolt against religious influences.

The drift away from organised religion is undoubtedly one of the most significant facts in modern life. It is sometimes said, indeed, that this tendency is the outcome of sheer indifference and practical materialism. And it is certainly

true that great numbers of people are to-day indifferent to religion because they are blind to the deeper aspects of life—because they are pre-occupied with superficial and external things. The order of life in which we are placed is profoundly hostile to any vital concern with religion. It rests on the twin forces of material expansion and private self-interest, and consequently it tends naturally to close our eyes to the deeper needs of our nature and the inner realities of life.

Religion, like all the higher interests of humanity, suffers inevitably from the practical materialism that is so widespread in our time. But, alongside of this negative indifference and the spiritual inertia which underlies it, there is developing a consciously critical and hostile attitude towards religion. There are, of course, many people who are strongly critical of traditional forms of religious belief and religious ethics, but who have learnt to distinguish between the form and the spirit of religion. There are many whose criticism of organised Christianity as we know it is directed against particular features in its theology or its moral influence. But there are also those whose criticism is more fundamental—who maintain, not merely that the ideas associated with religion are false, but that religion in any case is unnecessary, that it has no living function to fulfil, that it is a mere survival of outworn customs and beliefs, that religion in itself is a definitely reactionary and obstructive influence.

The criticism which is made of religion assumes different forms. Bertrand Russell, for example, maintains that it is vitiated by its psychological origin. In an article published in the *Rationalist Annual* for 1930 he declares that religion is the supreme obstacle that stands in the way of human welfare and human progress—the dragon that guards the door of the golden age. (In his chapter on the subject in " Principles of Social Reconstruction " he looks at the question from a quite different point of view, and one much more favourable to religion.) Religion, he now says, springs from the three

impulses of fear, conceit and hatred, and " it is because these passions make on the whole for human misery that religion is a force for evil." Other writers adopt a less extreme position. Middleton Murry suggests (in " The Necessity of Communism "—again in contrast with an earlier attitude) that religion must be set aside because it is a blend of two things—morality and spirituality—which should naturally be kept apart. Krishnamurti, who, in spite of his repudiation of the word, stands for a profoundly religious outlook, declares that religion is the " frozen thought of men," and that it therefore necessarily thwarts our free development. Marx, whose teaching was repeated with added emphasis by Lenin, and forms the basis of the official attitude of the Third International, maintained that religion is the " opium of the people," and serves by its insistence on the reality of the life to come to divert our attention from the evils of the present world.

In these criticisms there is undoubtedly an important element of truth. There is no doubt, for instance, that in many of its traditional forms religion does embody " frozen thought," that it does serve as an opiate. But is this true of religion in itself? We naturally tend to identify religion with the particular form of it with which we ourselves are most familiar. But modern study makes it clear that religion has an infinite variety of forms, ranging from the " totemism " and " animism " of primitive peoples to the historical world-religions and beyond. Even in particular faiths like Buddhism and Christianity there is an immense variety of belief and ritual. Correspondingly, religion covers a wide range of differing attitudes. It stands for the crudest superstition, for the grossest idolatry—it stands also for the purest spirituality. It represents all manner of varying outlooks; it yields all sorts of differing results in life. We find religion, for example, directly promoting war—and we find it condemning all war as wrong. We find it upholding absolute monarchy and

dictatorship; we find it supporting social inequality and class privilege—and we find it stirring men to revolt against these things, and promoting political and social equality. We see religion encouraging the individual accumulation of wealth—and we see it maintaining the principle of common property. We see religion making for persecution and intolerance and the repression of free thought—we see it also making for catholicity and freedom. We see men inflicting in the name of religion the most barbarous wrongs and cruelties on their fellows—and we see it inspiring in their minds the largest compassion and sympathy and the intensest hatred of cruelty and inhumanity. We see religion identified with a principle of ascetic renunciation and "otherworldliness," and leading men to seek a solitary salvation from the evils of a perishing world—and we see it consecrating the energies of life, sanctifying human joy, inspiring men with the vision of life in this world renewed and transformed. Men who are sincerely and whole-heartedly religious are led by their religion to the adoption of diametrically opposite points of view. And on the face of it it is impossible to say that one of these differing points of view and attitudes is more truly and intrinsically "religious" than the other. We cannot say that the Quaker is more "religious" than the Catholic, or the Catholic than the Quaker. We cannot say that either of them is more devout than the Hindu polytheist or the Chinese ancestor-worshipper.

Is religion, then, finding expression as it does in such varied forms, leading to such contradictory results, of any permanent significance? If it is to live in the modern world, it must reveal itself to us as something that is necessary to life. Does it meet that test? Is the religious factor in life essential to the welfare of mankind? If so, in what way? What purpose does it achieve? What is its particular "use"?

It is the object of this booklet to answer that question. To do that, it is plainly not enough to survey the facts—we have

to look beneath them. We have to ask, not merely what particular results religion has actually produced, but what is its essential tendency. We have to ask what is the inner nature of religion and what is the direction in which it develops, what is the positive thing that religion does for men in all its forms, what is the goal implicit in it from the first, but only partially and imperfectly realised through its historical expressions.

CHAPTER II

THE COMMON ELEMENT IN ALL RELIGION

RELIGION is a thing of many different types. It has produced "fruits" of many different kinds. Is there not, then, in religion itself, beneath all its differences of form, some common element, which goes to produce some common effect? Such a common element must evidently exist, since otherwise there could be no justification for the use of a common term. The problem is, Where shall we find it? And having found this universal factor in religion, can we also discover the nature of its influence? Can we assert that, for all its contradictory results, religion makes for a common end in life?

If there is a common element in religion, it must be something that exists in all its forms, from the most primitive to the most developed. It must be something which the Australian totemist shares with the Sufi or the Christian mystic. Plainly, then, it cannot be a matter of ceremony or creed or moral code. These things differ immensely from age to age and from race to race. The essence of religion must lie in something more permanent and fundamental—in something that lies deeper than the rites, the beliefs, the moralities, in which it finds expression. There has, of course, been a great deal of discussion as to the essence of religion, and many different definitions have been propounded. The defect of these is in general that they apply only to one phase of religious life—the more primitive or the more developed, as the case may be—and, even so, that they are essentially one-sided, and do not therefore bring us to the real heart of

the matter. It has been said, for example, that religion is "a feeling of absolute dependence on God," or, again, that it is "the recognition of duties as divine commandments," or "the belief in spiritual beings." Whatever element of truth these definitions may contain, they are quite evidently partial and inadequate.

A good deal of light has been cast upon the subject in recent times by the study of primitive religion. It is, of course, a mistake to suppose, as some writers do, that the nature of religion is exhausted by its more primitive expressions. The nature of religion in its fulness is, as Dean Inge has very truly said, "what it may grow into." No one would suggest that the whole nature of human personality is revealed in earliest infancy; yet the study of child-psychology is of immense significance. So also primitive religion, though it has its own necessary limitations, is of considerable importance, since it plainly shows the root from which all religion springs. The full meaning of religion is expressed only in the greatest souls, but its beginnings lie far back in the childhood of humanity.

Religion has been in the world for tens, perhaps for hundreds, of thousands of years. It is found among the most lowly and undeveloped peoples. Travellers have sometimes claimed to find a race of people who have no religion, but on fuller investigation that claim has nearly always broken down. It was said at one time that the aboriginal Australians had no religion. Actually we know, as the result of closer and more sympathetic study, that religion is—or, rather, was, until their traditional culture was disintegrated by Western influence—one of the most potent forces in their life. That is one example among many; and it is a particularly significant case, because the aboriginal Australians represent a very primitive human type.

Religion grew up at a very early period. It is a thing which springs somehow out of human nature in its reaction to the world. There was a school of thought years ago which used

to say—as there are still some who maintain—that religion is essentially an artificial thing, foisted upon the masses of mankind by kings and priests for the sake of their vested interests. There is, of course, an element of truth in that view, since religion is sometimes used as an instrument of class-privilege. It is only too often identified with the forces which resist social change. But certainly that has nothing to do with its origin. There were neither kings nor priests nor owners of property among the Black Men of Australia, or among our own ancestors in the Old Stone Age.

Religion is not an invention deliberately and consciously created. It is a spontaneous outgrowth of the human spirit. It is rooted in human nature. That is evident enough from a simple survey of the facts. But then we know that human nature is a curious compound. It contains the most diverse tendencies. Every institution, every custom, every belief, that exists or ever has existed, whether it be good or bad, true or false, harmful or helpful to the cause of human progress, is the outcome of human nature in some aspect. Art and science and philosophy and ethics are the product of human nature : so also are magic and witchcraft and human sacrifice and slavery and war. The question is, What side of our nature does religion represent ? Does it arise from what is permanent and fundamental in our make-up, or from what is transient and superficial ?

At a certain stage in human development—a stage which extended over an enormous period of time—men believed universally in magic. They believed that it was possible by means of certain magical rites, accompanied by an appropriate spell, to achieve all kinds of objective results—to bring rain, to secure abundant crops, to obtain protection from their enemies. Among the more primitive peoples beliefs of this kind are universal. In West Africa, for instance, death is never regarded as a natural occurrence; it is always attributed to the evil magic of some ill-disposed person. Among our

own ancestors beliefs of the same order were very widely held until comparatively recent times. The persecution of witches only ceased in the eighteenth century, and even now magical beliefs have by no means disappeared in Western countries. Yet it is clear that magic belongs to a passing phase of human consciousness. It is the product of ignorance and superstition. It has its roots in a certain side of human nature, but not in what is permanent and fundamental.

Has religion deeper and more abiding roots? Or does science tend to displace it as it tends to displace magical practices and beliefs? It is sometimes maintained that the basis of religion lies in fear. Bertrand Russell describes religion as "an attempt to mitigate the terror inspired by destructive natural forces." Freud's criticism of religion is based on the same view. It originated, he contends in his book, "The Future of an Illusion," as a means of enabling men to reconcile themselves to the evils of life. Man finds himself, Freud tells us, a stranger in a hostile world. He feels utterly helpless in face of the terrors of Nature, the cruelty of Fate (as shown especially in death), and the inequalities and sufferings imposed upon him by society. Instinctively he feels the need of protection and help, and in order to satisfy that need—in order to make tolerable his own helplessness—he creates the figures of the gods as his imaginary helpers, who (as he supposes) overrule the world for his good, and fulfil—in the future life—the demands of justice. These beliefs, therefore—the ideas of the gods, of reward and punishment, of life after death—are only projections of our own wishes which help to make life tolerable.

Religion, Freud maintains, is a "wish-fulfilment," an illusion rooted in fear. There is no doubt that this theory casts a good deal of light on certain forms of religious teaching. There is unquestionably a widespread tendency among us to believe what seems consoling or in some way emotionally desirable, and that tendency has certainly been at work in the

growth of particular religious doctrines. We see it, for example, in the traditional notion of Providence and in the conception of reward and punishment after death. But such beliefs, prominent as they have been in the form of religion which has come down to us, do not in any wise pertain to its essence. They have no place in primitive religion. Freud's account of the origin of religion is strangely inadequate, and curiously out of touch with the more recent developments in the study of the question. He takes it for granted that religion arose from the personification of Nature —the worship of the objects and forces of Nature (the sun, the moon, the clouds) as gods. " Man makes the forces of Nature (says Freud) not simply in the image of men with whom he can associate as his equals—that would not do justice to the overpowering impression they make on him—but he gives them the characteristics of the father," whom he looks to for protection and yet regards with fear, and thus he " makes them into gods " (The Future of an Illusion," p. 30). But recent research has shown that the belief in personal gods and spirits, great as its importance has been in religious evolution, is not the earliest expression of the religious consciousness. It has shown that the essential root of religion is to be found in a more complex emotion than simple fear.

Let us take as an illustration the religion of the aboriginal Australians. The central feature in that religion is not beliefs about the gods or the soul and its destiny. The Australians have beliefs about the soul—they believe in a curious form of reincarnation. They suppose (or, at least, certain of the tribes suppose) that each generation as it is born is the re-embodiment of certain ancestral beings, in whom the soul is eventually absorbed. They have, again, beliefs about the gods. Certain of the tribes believe in the existence of a high god of an inter-tribal character who lived at one time on earth and then ascended to the sky. He is called the father of men. He made the trees and the animals

and man himself. Men owe to him all the arts of life—all their tribal customs. It is he, the youths are told when they are initiated into the tribal secrets, " whose laws the tribes are now obeying." He punishes men when they break the established rules.

These beliefs are full of interest. Taken by themselves, they might appear to bear out Freud's conception of the origin and nature of religion. But they cannot be taken by themselves, for they do not hold the central place in the religion of the Australian tribes. The central point of that religion lies, not in any beliefs about the gods or the soul, but in the sense of sacredness which attaches to certain objects and certain beings. In each Australian clan (the tribes are sub-divided into clans, and the clan is the social unit) there is one object that is regarded with peculiar veneration—a piece of wood or polished stone, which is so sacred that it is kept in a kind of sanctuary, and which is credited—as an expression of the mysterious potency which sacredness implies—with marvellous powers. It can cure sickness and heal wounds and give men courage and strength. On this object (the " churinga ") there is engraved a design from which it derives its sanctity—a design which represents the " totem " of the clan. Each clan has its own " totem." Each, that is to say, has some animal or plant (or more rarely some inanimate object) which its members regard as peculiarly sacred and in some strange way akin to themselves. Thus one clan will have as its " totem " the kangaroo, another the lizard, a third the eagle-hawk. The members of each clan call themselves by the name of their " totem." It is so sacred to them that they will not kill or eat it, save ceremonially at an annual communion feast. The sacredness of the " totem " extends to the members of the clan—for their fellow-clansmen are all sacred beings. Nor is sanctity limited to them. Some portion of it belongs to every object which is felt in any way to resemble the clan " totem."

For the aboriginal Australian religion centres in the "totem," which is the pre-eminently sacred thing. But there is also vaguely felt to be a diffused sacredness in the universe. Among the American Indians, whose religion is similarly a form of totemism, this sense of a diffused sacredness is developed into a distinct conception. The Omahas "regarded all animate and inanimate forms, all phenomena, as pervaded by a common life, which was continuous and similar to the will-power they were conscious of in themselves. This mysterious power in all things they called Wakonda, and through it all things were related to man and to each other." Everywhere the peoples of North America recognised this same cosmic Power. And, in fact, traces of a similar outlook—traces of the same sense of a hidden mystery in the world, showing itself in all that arouses in a marked degree the feeling of wonder and awe—may be found among primitive peoples throughout the world. The primitive hunter (it has been said) "does not single out particular powers of Nature to be divinised and worshipped . . . nor is he one who looks on every manifestation of Nature as the work of individual personal spirits. He is rather a kind of primitive pantheist . . . who sees everywhere behind the outward appearance of things a vague undifferentiated supernatural power, which shows itself alike in beast and plant, in storm and thunder, in rock and tree, in the magic of the shaman and the spirits of the dead." (Dawson, "The Age of the Gods," pp. 26–7.)

Here, in this sense of cosmic mystery, in this dim perception of a Power in Nature which is "super-natural," this recognition of something in the world which baffles man's understanding and transcends his knowing, we have the foundation and the starting-point of all religion. It is in the sense of that which is mysterious, that which is "numinous" (in Otto's expression), that which is awe-inspiring, that which is "holy" or "sacred" (without at first any directly moral implication),

that there lies the basis of religion. Lucretius said—and Freud and Russell have followed him—that "fear first made the gods." And it cannot be denied that in the primitive attitude there is an element of dread. But the distinctive religious emotion is always something more than fear. It was no mere fear of the destructive forces of Nature which generated religion, no mere sense of human impotence. It was the positive sense of something wondrous, something divine. If we paraphrase Lucretius and say, "It is awe which made the gods," we are right. The primary fact is the religious consciousness.

That is not to say that religion is a merely "subjective" thing which casts no light on the nature of Reality—a mere "feeling" in the void. Religion is a response to the universe, an apprehension of a certain quality in things which men feel to be objectively there. It has its roots in the nature of man, because man has this capacity of response, this power of perceiving the deeper aspect of the world. At a certain point in their development men come to perceive that there is something in the world beyond what they can touch and see and hear, something which lies beyond the range of their understanding, something great and marvellous and divine. We cannot, therefore, as is sometimes urged, treat religion purely as a fact of human nature. We cannot ignore the question of its objective validity. If there is no enduring place for the sense of mystery, religion cannot maintain itself. The one abiding foundation of religion lies in the vision, which is re-born in the spirit of man from age to age, of the depth and grandeur of the universe.

The study of primitive religion reveals to us not simply the origin of religion in a psychological sense, not simply the root from which it has grown. It reveals to us what we set out to seek—its enduring essence, its common element. Amid all the variety of belief and ceremonial which it sustains, amid all the contrariety of its influence on men's thoughts and feelings

and on their life, religion everywhere and in all its forms stands for the sense of some Power, some Principle, some Reality which is felt to be supremely sacred and mysterious, before which we bow our souls in awe and reverence. Religion varies immensely in its interpretation of this Reality; it differs enormously in the beliefs which it holds regarding sacred things. And these differences have the most far-reaching effect in life. But underlying such differences there is always this much in common between the rival types of religious faith, that all alike stand for the vision of sanctity and for the spirit of awe. To the religious man, whatever his race, his church, his faith, this attitude is fundamental.

CHAPTER III

THE ESSENTIAL CONTRIBUTION OF RELIGION

It is plain, in the light of what has been said, that religion cannot at any level be reduced to simple morality. It is not merely a matter of doing good, not merely a matter of our relation to our fellow-men. Yet it is equally evident that that relation is involved. The "apprehension of sacredness" on which religion rests finds expression of necessity in a certain way of life. From the first religion has a bearing on conduct. Whatever is, for the primitive, peculiarly sacred is felt to be charged with magical potency. (The "holy" and the magically potent are, to begin with, one.) Consequently it must be treated with particular care. The sacred, therefore, is "taboo": it is hedged about with all kinds of restrictions, lest its power be unloosed to men's detriment.

To the savage this sense of the danger involved in his dealings with sacred things is intensely real. And it becomes a powerful motive-force in his conduct. The Australian (as I have said) will not kill or eat his "totem" animal, save ceremonially. And as he believes that his fellow-clansmen share in some measure the sanctity of the "totem," he feels that they also must be treated with a certain respect: they and he, in fact, are one, with a kind of mystic unity. Religion at the primitive level is a force which makes for the sense of kinship and social solidarity. At the same time, it sanctifies the power of custom, which is the tribal morality. To imagine, as people sometimes do, that savages have no morality is, of course, entirely contrary to the facts. Their

morality is not the same in its details as our own—it varies, indeed, to some extent from tribe to tribe. But it is a very real and a very rigid thing. Morality for the savage is a matter of custom—as it largely is for us—and, whatever its nature, custom is felt to be mysterious, since it is the product, not of individual thought and desire, but of the will and interest of the group. Hence it is regarded with awe and reverence, and invested with magical potency. The laws of the tribe must be obeyed, since their violation will bring strange and supernatural penalties, which will affect, not simply the individual offender, but the social group as a whole.

In this way religion comes to serve the interests of morality. And, in doing that, it naturally brings into play the religious spirit. It invests the customs of the group with a religious atmosphere. It brings to bear upon them the sense of awe, so that men feel in them something transcendent, which constrains them to obey, apart from any question of personal expediency. The customs of the group are reinforced by a "categorical imperative"—a "potent, felt, interior command, stronger than words." Religion promotes what Russell has called "the feeling of imperativeness and acting under orders." It promotes the spirit of earnestness and solemnity. It promotes also the spirit of courage and confidence. "The sentiments at the root of totemism (Durkheim says—and totemism may be taken as typical of the general character of primitive religion) are those of happy confidence rather than of terror and compression." The totemic cult is celebrated in the midst of songs and dances. It is the object of the cult to set in motion on behalf of its participants the mysterious Power which men feel about them. They see the expression of this Power in all successful activity —in the skill of the hunter, in the personal force of the chief. Through religion they seek to ally themselves with it, and so they are able to face the world, with all its dangers, with courage and confidence.

Religion brings a quickening of vital activity. It makes for the consecration of life. It saves men from weakness and isolation, and lifts them into oneness with a larger life. It is concerned, at the primitive level, above all with material things—with success in hunting and the gathering of food—but it has, none the less, a spiritual effect. It sustains men's efforts with its inspiration. It links them up with that which is greater than themselves. Wells has said that the subordination of self is "the essence of religion," and certainly it is an essential aspect of the religious spirit. Religion is from the first a social bond. It is a devotion which men share in common with the group. It unites them into "a single moral community." It draws them into the fellowship of a common reverence and a common loyalty.

Primitive religion is essentially ethical in its character. To the savage (Marett says) "religion stands for the whole of his concrete life so far as it is penetrated by a spirit of earnest endeavour." And it is the same, in principle, with religion at all stages of its growth. It is true that there are phases of religion in which its moral influence is exceedingly restricted. The development of religion led, as in ancient India and Egypt, to the growth of a priesthood and the elaboration of a ceremonial which stood increasingly apart from human and ethical interests. It was in such circumstances that the prophets of Israel arose in revolt against a ritual which was devoid of any wide moral significance. The prophets, in their demand for a religion that should be a living force for righteousness, voiced the essential demand of the religious consciousness. So far as religion is unethical, so far as it is a thing apart from the actual business of life, it is perverted from its true nature as a guiding and inspiring force. Religion is an affair of the whole personality, and so far as it is deep and vital, it affects a man's whole attitude towards life. For the man who whole-heartedly believes in it, and lays hold upon it, religion—of whatever type—is the sustaining and guiding and

inspiring force in life. Always and at every level religion takes men in some measure out of themselves; always it identifies them with the service of some greater Power; always it draws them into the fellowship of a common devotion and a common loyalty; always it gives them the sense of purpose and value and meaning in life through that devotion and that loyalty; always it brings them the strength, the courage, the inner unity, the sense of significance in the world, which come from the linking up of their individual lives with that which they feel to be sacred and supreme.

In his book, "The Present and Future of Religion," C. E. M. Joad has said, "The primary need of young people to-day is to feel that the universe is significant, and that their lives matter, not only to themselves, but to something other and greater than themselves." It is precisely that sense of sacredness and significance in the universe and in our human life that religion has everywhere brought to men. However crude, however superstitious, however narrow and dogmatic, however harmful, therefore, in certain ways, religion has always done for the world something that is vitally necessary to human well-being. It has always provided that essential inspiration to life which is a fundamental need of the human spirit. Wherever it is a living reality, religion is the sustaining and guiding and inspiring force in life. "Faith (said Tolstoy) is the knowledge of the meaning of man's life, through which man lives. Faith is the force of life." Tolstoy's own experience is a testimony to the truth of these words. In his youth he lost his belief in the dogmas of the Church, and for many years he found nothing positive to put in their place. He has described in his book, "My Confession," the agony of spirit which he suffered through the lack of a central and governing faith which should give meaning to life. Tolstoy's experience typifies the problem with which the modern world is faced. To find a religion

which shall satisfy our needs is ultimately a matter of life and death for humanity.

The life of man everywhere cries out for religion. We all need that sense of unity and purpose and meaning in life which religion brings. We all need to relate our life in some way to the deeper forces of the universe. We all need to make ourselves one with a greater Life and Power. There are many people, of course, who are not conscious of the need. The existing social order is profoundly hostile to any real and vital concern with religion. It has grown up in entire dissociation from any religious or spiritual outlook. It tends therefore to blind us to the inner and deeper forces of the world. At the present time, moreover, there are many people in whom religion is never consciously developed because of the break-up of the forms in which it has traditionally expressed itself and the resulting uncertainty and chaos. But it is hard to believe that there is any single soul who has never at any time felt in himself the stirring of the religious consciousness—who has never felt moved to awe and reverence in face of the mystery of life and love and death and the wonder of the universe, who has never felt impelled to give himself in devotion and loyalty to that which lies beyond himself. What is our human life without these things—without reverence, without awe, without the sense of a pervading mystery to impart greatness to all life and experience? What is life without the self-forgetting love wherein we lose and find ourselves? In this sense Whitman is plainly right when he cries that there can be "nor character nor life worthy the name without religion; nor land nor man nor woman without religion."

The religious spirit is essential to life. That spirit, it is true, is sometimes found, partially expressed, apart altogether from the conscious acceptance of a religious faith. To-day in Russia, for example, there are multitudes of people who are inspired by what is unquestionably a religious spirit of

devotion to the cause of Communism, yet who regard religion—because of the narrowness and dogmatism with which it has been so widely associated and the reactionary character of the social influence which it has so often exerted—as a mere degrading superstition. The religious spirit lies at the root of any worthy and noble life; and ultimately that spirit can only maintain itself if it is attached to a definitely and consciously religious outlook, for which the universe is "an oracle and a temple," and through every star, through every grass-blade, and most through every living soul the glory of a present God still beams."

CHAPTER IV

THE EVILS OF RELIGION

RELIGION has provided that essential inspiration to life which is a fundamental need of the human spirit. Yet it has done that sometimes in a strange and paradoxical fashion. It has taught us to look upon this earthly life of ours, or indeed —in certain forms of Oriental piety—any kind of individual existence, as a burden from which it is desirable that we should find deliverance. It has identified spirituality with an ascetic "otherworldliness" and a rooted hostility to the material life. It has led men to regard the highest existence as that of the man who has renounced all earthly ties. In this way it has distorted men's sense of values, and stood in the way of the development of a sane and rational morality. Some of the Christian saints looked upon bodily cleanliness as a pagan quality, and prided themselves on the rarity of their ablutions. It is said of the Curé D'Ars that so great was his fear and distrust of physical Nature that he would not even smell a rose for fear of sin.

In many forms of religion there has been a strongly marked ascetic strain, which has shown itself particularly in an unhealthy view of sex. The atmosphere of "shame and secrecy" with which (as the Bishops point out in the Report of the Lambeth Conference of 1930) the whole matter has been invested in Christendom is the outcome of the ascetic tradition in the Church. The Bishops do not, apparently, recognise this. They claim indeed that the newer attitude is "specifically Christian." "The Christian (they contend) sees life steadily and sees it whole" just because he looks

beyond this present life and this present world. But it is plainly not true that a belief in personal immortality suffices to give us a right perspective. If that had been the case, the Church would have maintained a right perspective from the first.

More than any other single man it was the Apostle Paul who laid the foundations of the traditional teaching. And for Paul marriage was not a thing in any way desirable in itself. It was a means of avoiding sin—a concession to the frailty of human nature. It was better (Paul believed) that men and women should remain celibate, as he was himself; but if they were unable to sustain such virtue, then they should marry. There was no question for Paul of the propagation of the species as a factor to be considered, since the world was shortly coming to an end. There was no question of any beauty or sanctity in married love, of any positive value in the married state. And this teaching sprang out of Paul's fundamental view of life. Life, as he regarded it, was a battle-ground between two radically opposed principles, the flesh and the spirit. The flesh was the necessary enemy of the spirit, and the essential source of sin. In the very nature of man there was an inherent depravity which corrupted men from the first and inclined their will to what was evil. On the basis of such an outlook it is quite evidently impossible to develop a sane and wholesome view of sex. And the change which is taking place to-day, the growth of a more healthy and natural attitude, is only possible because men are turning away more and more from the traditional teaching. The one essential foundation of a right approach is the vision of the sacredness of life here and now, the sense of the value and beauty and divinity of the life-principle as it lives and grows within us.

Religion does not necessarily stand for a sane and wholesome view of life. It does not necessarily make for enlightenment and progress. It makes sometimes for evil. It has

been responsible for the most terrible cruelty, for the most atrocious persecution, for the fiercest hostility, which has found vent again and again in actual organised war. We have only to think, in the history of Christianity, of the "wars of religion" in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and of the Crusades—when the Pope urged Christian people to "cease killing one another, and go and kill the enemies of your Lord." What is the ground of this? Why is it that religion has produced these strifes and animosities? Why is it that it has led men to hate, to persecute, to destroy their fellow-creatures? Is the divisive tendency fundamental, or does it arise out of the accidents of religious development?

Let us take the case of Christianity. Quite early in the history of the Church divisions began to show themselves. Even in the letters of Paul there are clear indications of their existence; and during the next few centuries there was a constant increase in their prevalence. At one time (after Christianity had been established as the official religion of the Roman Empire) a pagan historian declared, with a good deal of justification, that no savage beasts could equal the ferocity of Christians towards one another. What was the ground of this internecine hostility? The answer is clear enough. We find it implied in the writings of Paul. "If any man (said Paul to the Galatians) preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be accursed." There we have the very spirit which led in course of time to those bitter rivalries, those hostilities, those persecutions, which are so great a blot on the history of Christendom. Paul claims that his gospel is the only one admissible, that no other form of teaching is allowable in the Church. Christianity, he declares in effect, stands for this particular set of beliefs; if a man proclaims some other gospel, he has no right to the name of Christian, and there is no place for him in the Church. The Christianity of Paul was a vital power. It was in some aspects a finely spiritual thing. Yet it was

dogmatic, exclusive, intolerant. With Paul it was not yet formulated into a creed, but the spirit out of which the creeds arose, as the official and binding expression of Christian faith, was already present in him.

Is that spirit necessary to religion? Le Bon has said that "intolerance and fanaticism are the necessary accompaniments of the religious sentiment." Is that really the case? There seems, certainly, to be no obvious and immediate connection between the spirit of reverence, the sense of sacredness, the impulse of self-giving, which is the heart and essence of religion, and the intolerance, the dogmatism, the exclusiveness, by which it has been so widely accompanied. How does the connection arise? The answer lies, not in the spirit of religion, but in the nature of its forms—not in the sense of sacredness, but in the fashion in which it tends to find expression. To-day, as we know, Moslems and Hindus come from time to time into conflict in India. And the ground of the trouble is chiefly this, that for both religions in their orthodox forms sanctity is externalised in the shape of certain objects and ceremonies, and what is sacred to the one is often common and unclean to the other. To the Hindu, for example, the cow is a supremely sacred animal, while the Moslem regards it with indifference; and so there is conflict.

Religion becomes exclusive and intolerant in so far as sanctity is externalised, in so far as emphasis is laid upon the outer form of ceremony or belief. The Christian Church has become, and is to-day, an exclusive body so far as rites (like baptism) or doctrines (like the unique divinity of Jesus) or institutions (like the episcopacy) are regarded as in themselves sacred and essential. It is because the sense of sacredness, which lies at the root of all religion, has been externalised, because it has been identified with outer things—with outer forms of faith, with creeds, with rites, with institutions—that religion has been the cause of so much bitterness and exclusiveness and fanaticism. If only Paul had been true to

his insight when he declared that the greatest of all things is the spirit of love, the history of the Church would have been profoundly different from what it has been. If only Christianity had been identified, not with a system of dogmas, but with a spirit of life, it would have been saved from its terrible record of persecution and intolerance. It would stand to-day before the world, not as a thing divided against itself by the conflicting claims of separate churches, nor yet as a rival to other historic faiths, but as a force that seeks to unify humanity on the basis of the Life and Light within us.

CHAPTER V

RELIGION AND SOCIETY

It is the essential contribution of religion that, so far as it prevails effectively, it is the sustaining and guiding and inspiring force in life. And therefore it necessarily tends to affect life in all its aspects. It tends to control men's attitude, not only in their strictly private and personal, but also in their wider social and economic and political, relationships. The vitality of a society (it has been said) " is intimately bound up with its religion. . . . It is the religious impulse which supplies the cohesive force which unifies a society and a culture." (Dawson, " Progress and Religion," p. 232.)

The social influence of religion has, of course, varied immensely in its extent and in its character at different times. In primitive society religion was supreme. It was the vital centre of the whole social life, investing every activity of life with a certain inspiration and a certain sanctity. Primitive life, though it was crude and rough, was marked by far more of solidarity and of social unity than is the life of our civilisation. There were none of those wide divisions of rank and property and culture that characterise the modern world. And the great unifying and controlling force was religion, which brought to men's minds continually the sense of their common brotherhood in the social group. To the savage religion was a truly pervasive influence.

In the early stages of civilisation, after the rise of a settled existence based on agriculture, the case was similar. Through its pervasive influence, in fact, religion rendered immeasurable services to the growth of civilisation. It has been suggested

that agriculture itself originated through the ritual imitation of the processes of Nature; and certainly every agricultural operation was at first "a sacramental act." "Men opened the earth with their ploughs to receive the miraculously quickened seed. They irrigated it and rendered it fruitful with the help of the fertilising god of fresh water. Finally, with rites of propitiation and lamentation they reaped the harvest and ground the grain, taking in a sense the life of the god of vegetation, that they themselves might live" (Dawson, "The Age of the Gods," p. 105). We see the civilising influence of religion, moreover, in the growth of city life. The germ of the city was the temple, and the city was at first always a sacred place, the home of a god. Political authority was, to begin with, entirely theocratic. The early kings were priest-kings, the representatives of the local gods. The temple, again, was of considerable economic importance, since it provided both the resources and the authority necessary, for example, to the works of irrigation on which civilisation rested in Sumeria.

In these and many other ways religion contributed to the growth of civilisation. But the main fact is that it provided the sense of purpose, of value, of meaning in life, which is the necessary basis of any lasting civilisation. All the great enduring civilisations of antiquity (like those of Egypt, of China, of India), which with all their faults were at least free from the instability of the modern world, rested on an essentially religious basis.

Wherever it is a living power, religion becomes the creative centre of life—its influence is felt in life as a whole. It is universally acknowledged that early Christianity was an intensely vital movement. There was in the life of the primitive Church a vital energy and a spiritual power which have been largely lost in after ages. It is therefore especially significant that the early Christians endeavoured to organise their whole life on a religious basis. The goal of the early

Church was not the mere separate salvation of individual souls : it was the transformation of human life in its entirety. The churches were companies of men and women who were looking towards that great transformation—who were "fellow-workers unto the Kingdom of God." The Kingdom of God as they conceived it was to come by supernatural means. But when it came, it would involve the overthrow of the whole existing world-order. Because of its proclamation of this coming change, Christianity made its chief appeal at first, not to the respectable and prosperous elements of society, but to the poor, the downtrodden, the slaves. It was a proletarian movement, if ever there was one. "The greater part of you (said Caecilius in the second century) are worn with want, cold, toil, and famine; men collected from the lowest dregs of the people." Respectable and educated Romans in general regarded the Christians with loathing and contempt. For Tacitus Christianity was a "pestilent superstition." The members of the Church at Rome he describes as "those detestable criminals who went by the name of Christians." The Christians, it is clear, were regarded as the enemies of established society. They were described by one writer as "enemies of the gods, of the emperors, of the laws, of morals and of all Nature." What was their own conscious attitude towards the State and its institutions ?

With regard to the State, there was an apparent inconsistency. Paul lays it down that government is divinely ordained for the suppression of wrong-doing. This view was accepted by the great majority of early Christian writers. Yet for the first two centuries Christians would take no part in the administration of the Empire, and would not themselves sue wrong-doers in the courts of law. Over and over again they were involved in conflict with the Empire through their refusal to sacrifice to the gods of the State and to acknowledge the divinity of the Emperor. There was, in

fact, a rooted opposition of principle between the Empire and the Church, and so there was bound to be conflict. That is why we find that it was the most patriotic Emperors who persecuted the Christians. "Patriotic Emperors hated Christians because they were patriotic"—because they were devoted to the principles of the Empire, with which the principles of Christianity were in conflict. Christians acknowledged that in the existing state of the world the Roman government was necessary, and that it must be obeyed as far as possible; but they looked to the coming of a new world-order in which that government would be done away, and in the meantime they were ready to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their loyalty to Christ.

The opposition between Christianity and the Roman State comes out most clearly in the case of war; and in view of the subsequent attitude of the Church there is a special interest in the position adopted by the early Christians. Their general outlook is well expressed by Arnobius (early fourth century), who writes, "We have received from Christ's teachings our law that evil ought not to be repaid with evil, that it is better to endure a wrong than to inflict it, to shed one's own blood rather than to stain one's hands and conscience with the blood of another." It was the acceptance of this teaching that prevented Christians from having recourse to the Roman courts of law, with their infliction of violence and torture. The same teaching forbade them to take part in war. "The Lord in disarming Peter (said Tertullian) ungirded every soldier." This was the general attitude of the Church during the first two centuries of its existence. Even after Christianity had become the official religion of the Empire, there were for a time some who maintained the earlier point of view.

What was the attitude of the Church towards the other outstanding evil of Roman civilisation—the institution of slavery? Plainly that institution was contrary to Christian

principles. It could have no part in the new order of life to which the Christians looked. Yet we do not find in the early Church any explicit condemnation of it, or any attempt to work for its abolition. Paul, as we know, induced a runaway slave to return to his master. But in the Church there was no distinction between master and slave—all were on a common level of equality. And from the first to set a slave free was looked upon as a praiseworthy action. The early Christians, we must remember, did not regard it as their business to bring about the new order: it was their business only to prepare themselves and their fellow-men for its advent. The idealism of the early Christians never led them to work out any kind of social programme.

At the same time, there was within the early Church a strongly Communistic trend. In the first Christian community at Jerusalem, we are told, the members had all things in common. That is probably an overstatement of what was actually done, but it represents the early Christian ideal. We find in the primitive Church generally the belief that, "while it was lawful for the Christian man to hold property, to give all that one had to the common funds of the society was the more perfect way."

In the course of centuries the outlook of the Church was changed. Christianity was established as the official religion of the Roman Empire, and in the process it lost much of its primitive idealism. The hope of the Second Coming of Christ fell into the background, and the vision of any wide re-ordering of life virtually disappeared. Yet the Church rendered great services to the cause of civilisation. During the long period of chaos which followed the break-up of the Roman Empire it alone maintained the tradition of unity; and when in course of years a new civilisation arose on the ruins of the old, it had the Church as its centre and focus. The Catholic Christianity of the Middle Ages was something vastly different from the religion of Christ. Nevertheless

it was, in the words of Lecky, "an all-pervasive energy animating and vivifying the whole social system. . . . The Church was the very heart of Christendom, and the spirit that radiated from her penetrated into all the relations of life."

The keynote of Christian thought in the Middle Ages was unity. The Church sought to unify the whole of life, in all its aspects, under the control of Christian principle. At the foundation of the medieval outlook was the conception of the sovereignty and supremacy of Law. "Law is king," said the thinkers of the time. By "law" they did not mean decrees or statutes (the laws of the State), but something far more exalted—the law of God. This law was revealed in the Bible and interpreted by the Church, and it was also in its main features universally recognised by the reason of man. The thinkers of the Middle Ages accepted as a fundamental belief the idea of the "Law of Nature," which had been developed by the Stoics and taken over from them by the Fathers of the Church. Naturally, it was supposed, all men recognise certain moral principles, which are written in their hearts and derived directly from God. The Church identified this law of Nature with the law of God revealed in the Scriptures, and it claimed to be itself the guardian and interpreter of the divine and natural law.

According to the law of Nature all men were free and equal. That implies, as medieval thinkers recognised, that men should live together in peace and freedom, owning all things in common, with no coercive government, no social inequality, no private property. That was the ideal, and before the Fall, it was held, that condition of affairs actually prevailed. In the present state of the world it is otherwise. The law of Nature has been set aside by the institutions of society. The Church maintained that those institutions, far from ideal in themselves, must yet be accepted as a necessary accommodation to the sinful nature of man. The existing institu-

tions of society were a result of sin, and they were also a means of checking and controlling sin. At the same time it was taught that, though the dictates of natural law could not be literally and completely fulfilled, they must always be kept in view. Political authority and private property were not absolute rights to be exercised without restraint. The Church as the custodian of the natural law was always there to check and control their working.

What, then, was the relation of the Church and the State? To-day Church and State represent two different societies, of which the latter is supreme. In the Middle Ages it was different. There was, in theory, at any rate, one single society, living under one principle of life, expounded by one supreme authority. If a man was excommunicated by the Church, then he lost all his legal and political rights. According to medieval theory, the State was instituted on account of sin. It was produced by the lust of dominion. But it was also held that the State was a remedy for sin. Its object was the punishment of iniquity and the doing of justice. Justice was the keynote of the medieval conception of the State. It was commonly held that where there was no justice, there was no king, but only a tyrant, who might lawfully be resisted, and if necessary deposed. The sovereignty of the State was limited by its ethical basis. It was also limited in another way. To-day each national State is a separate sovereign power. The public opinion of its own subjects is the supreme authority. In the Middle Ages all European states were regarded as belonging to a wider community, the Christian Commonwealth. All were regarded as "bound by a Christian law, founded on the Bible and the traditions of the Church." The Church was a truly international body, and it stood for a united Christendom. The ideal of the greatest Popes was a federal world-state under their own supreme sovereignty.

The Papal ideal broke down in practice, largely through the

growth in the various countries of separate national feeling. But it is none the less significant to observe its character, and to see how religion in the Middle Ages stood for an organised internationalism. We have, of course, to recognise the limitations both of medieval practice and of the medieval ideal in the matter of war and peace. The Church did not perceive that warfare as such is contrary to Christian principles. The Popes themselves made war; their claims were a cause of war. But, within the sphere of Christendom, they stood for the ideal of peace. In practice also the Church strove to mitigate the private war which was the great curse of the time, by protecting non-combatants against violence, and by limiting such warfare to certain fixed periods.

Medieval thinkers maintained that by nature all men are free and equal. Yet they accepted the Feudal System, which condemned the great majority of people—the peasants—to live as serfs, and they even tolerated the continuance of slavery. They held that these things sprang from sin, and must therefore be accepted, though at the same time emancipation was considered a meritorious act. With regard to property, it was universally acknowledged that Communism was the ideal condition of society, but again it was held that private property was necessary on account of sin. The rights of property, however, were severely limited. It was laid down in the Church law that a man can only possess that of which he makes a good use; the man who makes a bad use of his property has really no right to it at all. Aquinas taught that no man can rightfully keep for himself more than he actually needs. He said it was right for a man who sees another in need and who has not wherewith to help him to take from a rich man's property and give to the needy. The Church as a whole appears to have recognised that a man who was in want and stole another's property committed only a slight offence. But the influence of the Church was not confined to charity. It had two directly practical effects

on economic relationships—in the prohibition of usury, and in the principle of the just price. The taking of interest was forbidden in all cases where it was simply the price of a loan. It was allowed as compensation in case the loan involved a loss to the lender or a share in the risks of an enterprise. "Engrossing and forestalling" (that is, the holding up of supplies with a view to raising their prices) were also severely condemned. "Whoever buys corn, wine and meat (said Trithemius) in order to drive up their price, and to amass money at the cost of others is, according to the law of the Church, no better than a common criminal." A man who committed such an offence was in fact liable to heavy punishment, even to the loss of his civil rights. The exaction of usury and of exorbitant prices tend naturally to accumulate riches in the hands of a few, who hoard their wealth instead of using it for the common good. It was therefore contrary to medieval principles. A medieval teacher like Aquinas realised that superabundance of wealth on one side means poverty on the other; and the Church in general stood against the mere selfish pursuit of gain.

With all its evils and all its limitations, medieval Catholicism was a power which covered, or sought to cover, the whole of life. The influence of religion was often thwarted by the blindness and folly and selfishness of men and by the chaotic conditions of the world. And the fruit of religion, so far as religion genuinely yielded fruit, was very far from being simply love and joy and peace. But religion was, at least, a social force. It did bear fruit in a sense of corporate responsibility. It did stand as a check to the working of mere unfettered private self-interest. By contrast the great weakness of religion in the modern world is its failure in that respect, its abdication of the social function which it must fulfil if it is ever again to become a vital power in the world. When in 1926 bishops and other Church leaders sought to intervene in a great industrial crisis, that seemed to many people a

startling innovation. So it was, to us. We have grown up in a world that is built on the assumption that religion is one thing, economics and politics quite another. That is our tradition. But that tradition is not only a thoroughly bad one; it is also a comparatively recent thing. It goes back less than 300 years.

It is sometimes supposed that the modern divorce arose as the immediate outcome of the Protestant Reformation. It has even been maintained that Protestantism itself was simply a by-product of those economic tendencies which have created modern capitalism. That, however, is certainly untrue. As Tawney has shown in "Religion and the Rise of Capitalism," both Luther and Calvin and their early followers stood for religion as a force ruling and inspiring life in every sphere. Luther was in social matters a thoroughgoing conservative. He was completely attached to the old order. On the one hand, he had no sympathy with the demand which was growing up for the abolition of serfdom. He described that demand as "against the Gospels and róbbery," and at the time of the Peasants' Revolt he ranged himself very strongly on the side of the feudal lords. On the other hand, Luther's conservatism meant that he was opposed to the growth of capitalist trading and finance. He denounced the growing money-power just as strongly as he denounced the corruptions of the Church. On the subject of usury he was quite uncompromising. He had no more sympathy with capitalism than he had with communism or democracy. Even foreign trade (at any rate, with the East) he would like to have seen suppressed.

Calvin's attitude was different from Luther's. We see that from the simple fact that he abandoned the prohibition of usury. He allowed the taking of interest up to 10 per cent. He regarded credit and banking and foreign trade as entirely legitimate. But he sought to limit their operation by a rigid system of restriction and discipline. Calvinism, says Tawney,

was at first "a creed which sought, not merely to purify the individual, but to reconstruct Church and State, and to renew society by penetrating every department of life, public and private, with the influence of religion" ("Religion and the Rise of Capitalism," p. 102). The Mecca of Calvinism was the city of Geneva; and Geneva was very far from being a capitalists' Paradise. The life of the city was supervised by a religious court, the Consistory, which constantly asserted its authority in economic questions. Although interest was permitted up to 10 per cent. in normal circumstances, it was laid down that loans must be made without charge to the poor, and that men must not exploit their neighbours' necessities. This principle is quite contrary to the morality of capitalism, and there was, naturally enough, a constant attempt to evade it. That attempt was denounced unsparingly by the ministers. "The poor cry (said one preacher), and the rich pocket their gains; but what they are heaping up for themselves is the wrath of God."

In spite of his concessions to capitalism, it can hardly be said that Calvin was, any more than Luther, the mouthpiece of capitalist interests. And wherever Calvinism spread, it carried with it the spirit of its founder. In Scotland, for example, John Knox declares in his "Book of Discipline" that it is the business of the Church to punish "oppressors of the poor by exactions and deceiving of them in buying and selling by wrong measure." In America, among the New England colonists, a strenuous effort was made to apply the discipline characteristic of Geneva. The principle of buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest was strongly condemned by the ministers. Religion had not yet learnt to identify the service of Mammon with the service of God.

Yet, in spite of all this, Calvinism did in the long run become the ally of developing capitalism. It is significant that it was everywhere among the middle classes, and especially among the traders and merchants, that Calvinism found its

strongest support. As time went on, their outlook impressed itself more and more successfully upon the churches to which they belonged. In course of time, the sanction which Calvinism gave to business enterprise and money-making came to the fore, and the element of discipline and restraint fell more and more into the background. Along with that there disappeared the vision of a Christian society. The ideal of Calvinism was at its best a harsh and narrow one, and it is not surprising that it should come to be identified with the principle of economic individualism. A favourite Calvinist idea (much dwelt upon by the English Puritans) was that of life as a "calling." Calvinism was essentially an ascetic religion. It bade men put away ease and enjoyment, and regard their work, not as a means of life, but as an end in itself. "Production for production's sake" became the command of religion. In the eyes of the later Puritans, success in business became in itself "almost a sign of spiritual grace, . . . a proof that a man has laboured faithfully in his vocation." In this way the ground was prepared for the view which exalted self-interest into an infallible guide in the affairs of trade and industry. Profit-making came to be regarded as a sacred duty. "If God (said Richard Baxter) show you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way, if you refuse this and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling and refuse to be God's steward." In a similar fashion John Wesley said, "We must exhort all Christians to gain all they can and to save all they can; that is, in effect to grow rich." Wesley saw that the process had its dangers. "As riches increase (he said), so will pride, anger and love of the world." That aspect of the matter, however, was not much emphasised.

One of the greatest wrongs ever perpetrated upon the common people of Great Britain was the "Enclosure" movement, under which the common lands were stolen from the people, and their traditional rights were wrested away.

It is significant of the changing attitude of Protestantism that in the sixteenth century this movement was met by vigorous protest and denunciation from the leaders of the Protestant Reform, but that in its later stages, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when it became far more widespread and far more serious in its social effects, the leaders of religion stood aside. They stood aside because they were coming more and more to accept the ethics of capitalism, with its deification of self-interest. The Church has abdicated its social function. And the consequence has been that the civilisation of the modern world has in its later stages developed substantially apart from religious influences. "Modern capitalism (says J. M. Keynes) is absolutely irreligious." And for that very reason—through its idolisation of individual self-interest—it is infected with an essential instability. It leads naturally to conflict and chaos. It is ultimately only through the renewal of religion as a vital and controlling force—the renewal of religion, not in its traditional forms, which have lost their reality and their life, but in fresh and living forms —that we can to-day lay the foundations of a new civilisation and a new society.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGION AND THE SENSE OF UNITY

RELIGION if it is to be true to itself, true to its own essential genius, must be the great driving-force in life as a whole. But in what direction does it lead us? Can it be said that religion as such gives us any guidance as to the kind of ideal we should pursue? I have spoken of the differing and sometimes contradictory ideals to which religion in its various forms has given rise. I have spoken of the influence which has been exerted by the Christian outlook in its main expressions. To-day we cannot take as our standard the religion of the Christian Church at any phase of its development (whether primitive or medieval or post-Reformation) as though it embodied a unique and final revelation. We must take both a wider and a deeper view. Can we say, if we do that, that there is an ideal tendency implicit in religion itself, but developed in some forms of it more fully than in others, which may serve as a guide and a test? I have indicated the common ground of religion everywhere as the sense of reverence, of devotion, of loyalty to some sacred power or principle. Over and above this fundamental fact, is there any common ground in the higher and more developed religions? H. G. Wells has suggested that the way to religious unity is through the cleansing of each faith from the dross of superstition which has gathered round it in the course of centuries. He maintains that if we penetrate to the inner truth of each, we shall find that it is the same truth. Is that really the case?

To answer that question it is necessary that we should survey the teaching of some of the great prophets who have been the leaders and pioneers of the higher religion of the world. Let us take to begin with, the teaching of the Persian prophet, Zoroaster, who, with the possible exception of the earlier Hebrew prophets, was the first of the great leaders of religion. (As to his date, there is a good deal of divergence among the estimates of modern scholars. Some place him as early as 1200 or 1300 B.C., others as late as 600 or 700 B.C.) The substance of his teaching is preserved in the earlier hymns of the Zend-Avesta. As these hymns reveal him, Zoroaster was essentially a religious reformer. He denounced the worship of the Nature-spirits whom men revered as gods, and called them to the service of the "Wise Lord" (Ahura-Mazdà), the one true God. Ahura-Mazda, he taught, is the Creator of the world and all that is therein. He is the universal ruler and judge. He knows all that is and is to be. His eyes behold all men's deeds, and he requites them according to their deserts in this world and the next. Like the Hebrew prophets, Zoroaster felt himself to be God's messenger, entrusted with a definite mission to the world. It was only his profound conviction of the truth and urgency of his message that enabled him to carry on his work. Like every prophet, he had to face opposition and loneliness. And, as has happened so many times in the history of religion, the opposition to the prophet came from the priest. The priests were devoted, by force of tradition and of personal interest, to the established cult and the ideas associated with it. Zoroaster, therefore, had to meet their determined resistance. And it was many years before his teaching made any real headway.

The religion of Zoroaster has been widely misunderstood in the West in two particular respects. In the first place, his monotheism has been denied because of the emphasis he laid on the six great spirits whom he called Amesha-Spentas

(" Immortal Holy Ones "). These spirits are not in reality, as has been supposed, separate powers or gods. As is indicated by their names (" Good Thought," " Sovereignty," " Perfection," and so forth), they are simply attributes of God personified and represented as partially independent beings. Like the " persons " of the Christian Trinity, they are within the being of God. Misunderstanding has also arisen regarding the significance of the great conflict between good and evil which is the most striking feature of Zoroaster's teaching. It has often been supposed that the prophet was a dualist in the sense that he believed in the existence of two co-equal powers contending for the mastery of the world. What he taught is this: in this world there are two great opposing forces, the Good Spirit or Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of Ahura-Mazda himself, and the Hostile Spirit or evil power, which stands against it. Zoroaster speaks of the two spirits as " twins ": they come into existence together, and are constantly associated with one another, though always as antagonists. Although they exist in ceaseless enmity, both spirits proceed from God. The one (the Spirit of Good) is (so to say) the positive expression of the divine Reality, the other is its negative counterpart.

Zoroaster's main emphasis was the practical one. The conflict, he saw, goes on in human life; and it is man's part to take his share in it and to help on the victory of Good. The service of God is the endeavour after righteousness. It is not, however, confined to what we commonly regard as morality. The cleavage between good and evil runs through Nature as well as through humanity, and the reclamation of waste land, the establishment of an ordered and settled agricultural life, means the conquest of a piece of the enemy's country for the Lord. The religion of Zoroaster was thus a socially progressive force, since it took its stand on the side of agricultural civilisation as against a wandering and nomadic life. One of the first duties of the convert was to

abjure the theft of cattle and the ravaging of villages inhabited by the worshippers of Ahura-Mazda.

A prominent place in Zoroaster's teaching is held by the expectation of the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven. The prophet hoped that he would himself with his followers live to see the final struggle against evil and the dawn of a new age and the resurrection of the dead. Later (as in the case of Christianity) this belief was modified, and it came to be held that the soul would go to its reward or punishment immediately at death, while the final judgment was postponed for 3000 years. In the final consummation, it was taught, Good would be completely triumphant. All men would become of one speech, and join in the praise of God. Last of all, the evil Spirit would be destroyed, and hell itself would be brought back for the enlargement of the world.

Zoroaster called men to the worship and service of the "Wise Lord." The foundation of all his work, the inspiration of all his activity, was the vision of God as one. The sense of an ultimate unity in the universe was fundamental in his religion. It has been called "a creed of strife," but the strife to which the prophet summoned men was a strife aiming at the victory of good and the realisation of unity in life. The great prophets of religion have everywhere stood for the vision of unity as the ultimate fact and the ultimate principle of life. So it was in their different ways with Confucius, with Mohammed, with Buddha, with Jesus, with the seers of the Upanishads.

Confucius, the sage of China, lived in the sixth century B.C. His great interest was from the first in ethics and politics—in the practical life of the individual and the community. He does not lead us into the deeper places of the soul. He was not, like his older contemporary, Lao-Tse, a mystic. It is sometimes said indeed that his outlook was akin to that of Positivism, which rules out any reference to unseen Reality. But that is a mistake. He fully accepted

the traditional Chinese belief in a supreme Power, which men called "Heaven." He believed, in fact, that he was himself entrusted by Heaven with a mission to perform in the world, and while that mission was unfulfilled, he was confident that his enemies could do nothing to injure him. He faced difficulty and adversity and disappointment with serenity and fortitude, believing that, though men did not recognise him, Heaven knew him, and that was sufficient.

The religion of China consisted in the time of Confucius, as it has consisted since, on one side in ancestor-worship. The sage fully accepted the practice, as his own followers have done. He believed in the presence and power of the spirits. But his attitude was very different from that of modern Spiritualism. He did not encourage communication. He was once asked the meaning of wisdom. "To give oneself earnestly (he replied) to the duties due to men, and while respecting spiritual beings (*i.e.*, ancestral spirits) to keep aloof from them—that may be called wisdom." His attitude was the very opposite of that "other-worldliness" which has been so largely associated with traditional Christianity. He was concerned above all with the practical expression of religion in life. In his day China was in a condition of feudal chaos. There was constant war between the states of which the country was composed. Within the states there was disorder, anarchy, oppression. Confucius saw that while this condition of affairs continued, human life would necessarily be a prey to evil and corruption. He himself sought to obtain a position of political responsibility, so that he might directly apply his principles. For a time he held office as minister of justice in a certain state. It is said that his success was such that crime disappeared altogether. Unfortunately the ruler of the state began after a time to neglect his duties, and Confucius would no longer consent to serve him. He spent many years wandering

from place to place seeking political employment, and he died a disappointed man.

Confucius had that faith in the essential goodness of human nature which is a necessary basis of all effective effort after reform. He saw that the true law of our being is the law of fellowship. He was once asked to sum up that which should be the ruling principle of life; and he replied in a single word which means, "My heart in sympathy with yours." For Confucius, as for Jesus, the supreme law of life is the Golden Rule—the ethical expression of unity. It is true that for him this principle had not the same fullness of meaning that it had for Jesus. Yet when we have recognised his limitations to the full, his work remains of the utmost value as an endeavour to bring about the practical unification of life and so to build up a well ordered human commonwealth.

The teaching of Confucius, with its political preoccupations and its practical purpose of regenerating society, stands in very marked contrast to that of his Indian contemporary Gotama Buddha. Buddha's great concern was the salvation of the individual. Yet salvation as he conceived it involved as an essential element the sense of unity and the spirit of good-will and compassion and charity, to which it leads. For Gotama the great outstanding fact of existence was the fact of suffering. He placed in the very forefront of his teaching, as the first of the "Four Noble Truths," the universality of suffering. "Birth is suffering, age is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, contact with what we dislike is suffering, separation from what we like is suffering, failure to attain what we crave is suffering—all that makes bodily existence is suffering." Gotama takes it for granted as axiomatic that once this fundamental truth dawns upon us, we must seek to secure release. The story tells that he himself, when the pressure of the problem of suffering began to weigh upon him, was constrained to leave

his home, to abandon his wife and child, and to concentrate all his energies on its solution. It is said that for six years he wrestled with the problem, until at last, as he sat in the solitude of the forest, there came to him the solution he was seeking. Then it was that he became the "Buddha," the "Enlightened One." The solution that he attained is briefly this: that since suffering is universal, since it is inherent in the nature of life, since it belongs to the very essence of individualised existence, we can only get rid of it by freeing ourselves from the bondage of individuality—by rooting out the fundamental desire for life that is shared by all living things. Buddhism, like Christianity, is a gospel of redemption. But for Christianity that from which we need to be delivered is the power of sin. The goal that is held out to us is a perfected existence as individual spirits in heaven. For Buddhism, that from which we need to be redeemed is the burden of individuality. The goal that lies before us is Nirvana—and, whatever else Nirvana may imply (as to which there is no certainty), it clearly involves the cessation of individual existence.

Ethically, Gotama's teaching is at a higher level than that of Zoroaster or Confucius. He repudiates all self-seeking, all ill-will, all retaliation, all intolerance. He inculcates a universal compassion and charity, founded on the sense of the oneness of all life. "Not by hatred does hatred cease, but by love alone." "We will ever be suffusing the whole wide world with thought of love, far-reaching, grown great, beyond measure, void of anger or ill-will." "Let us cultivate towards the whole world a heart of love unstinted. . . . This state of heart is the best in the world."

The same teaching essentially, on the ethical side, is given by the great, though unknown, seers of ancient India, the authors of the Upanishads, which contain the essence of the traditional wisdom of the country. (They were written at various dates between perhaps 600 and 300 B.C.) But in the

Upanishads the ethical teaching has a surer and stronger foundation. That " sense of oneness with all living things, from which must flow a universal love," which is the positive aspect of the Buddhist ethic, is there made to rest on the vision of the One Spirit which dwells at the heart of all. Gotama appears to have given no clear teaching as to the nature of the ultimate Reality. He was absorbed in the practical problem of the attainment of " salvation," and he seems to have regarded the question of " God " as a purely speculative issue. He did indeed affirm the reality of a permanent principle beneath the flux of phenomena. " There is, O disciples (he said), something that is not born, not produced, not created, not compounded." But as to the nature of that " something " he appears to have maintained an unbroken silence. It is the basic teaching of the Upanishads, on the other hand, that this permanent principle, this abiding Reality, this heart and substance of the universe, is the Spirit, with which we ourselves are one.

In Indian religion there are, of course, many other elements. There is, in particular, the conception of transmigration (which was held in a certain sense by Buddha himself) and the associated doctrine of Karma or the Deed, according to which our destiny in successive lives depends purely and simply upon our individual conduct. It is strange that Indian religion has emphasised so strongly a conception resting, as this doctrine plainly does, upon the complete separateness of the individual as a moral unit, while at the same time proclaiming a truth which utterly transcends it. The supreme insight of Indian sages is expressed in the apprehension of unity. Even in the ancient hymns of the Rig Veda (written at the time of the Aryan conquest, perhaps a thousand years before the earliest of the Upanishads) we have here and there the recognition of a deeper unity beneath the seeming separateness of the gods. In the developed wisdom of the seers it is taught that this unity is the unity,

not (as Western religion has commonly held) of an external Creator, but of an all-pervading and all-enfolding Spirit. "That which is the subtle essence, the whole world hath that as its soul. That is Reality, That is the Spirit, That art thou." "Within the heart, perceived by the heart and the mind, dwelleth He, the inward Soul of all. To know this is immortality." That is the essential contribution of Indian wisdom, which in its insight far surpasses the traditional theology of the West, with its dualism and externality. Where Indian religion has been ineffective is in the practical and social expression of the vision for which it has stood. It has made of it too largely a matter of contemplation rather than of creative activity. It has called men too exclusively to the realisation of unity in their souls rather than to the achievement of unity in the life of the world.

By contrast with the mysticism of India, the religion of Mohammed has been dominated by a rigid dualism in its conception of God and His relation to the world. For Islam God is the great Despot, of whom men are mere slaves; He is the Potter, and we are the clay. Yet Mohammed also in his own way stood for the vision of unity. Like Zoroaster many centuries before, he lived among men who were polytheistic Nature-worshippers—who had not yet risen to the thought of the unity of the central Power of the universe. And (as with Mohammed) it was his mission to lead them to that thought—to wean them from "idolatry" to the worship of one God. "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is His prophet": that is the Islamic creed. Mohammed claimed to be God's final prophet, sent to remove the deficiencies of the former revelations of the Jews and Christians; but his primary emphasis was on the unity of God. To the Arabs, indeed, his denunciation of image-worship was the great stumbling-block. At one point in his life Mohammed seemed ready to compromise with their traditional practices and beliefs. He suggested that the

gods whom they adored might, after all, be real—they might be heavenly beings who had power to intervene with God (like the Catholic " saints "). This concession aroused great enthusiasm, and would doubtless have led, if it had been maintained, to an immediate triumph for Mohammed; but he soon repented of his timidity, and renewed the struggle.

Mohammed stood not merely for the abstract unity of God : within the limitations of his vision, he stood for unity as a practical principle of life. All who accepted his message and acknowledged his position as prophet he gathered into one fellowship. " Every Moslem (he said) is the brother of every other Moslem." And, although he was very far from realising the full implications of brotherhood even within the ranks of Islam, yet he gave it a definite application. He made it his task to reform the prevailing morality, to abolish blood-revenge, to establish an orderly government. Traditionally the religion which he founded, in spite of its obvious imperfections, in spite of the strife and fanaticism for which it has been responsible, has obliterated race prejudice among its own adherents to a greater extent than any other religious system.

Mohammed lived in the sixth and seventh centuries after Christ; but the religion of Jesus, though earlier in time, belongs to a higher phase of spiritual development. In the teaching of Jesus we see the outlines of a new synthesis—a fusion of the present vision of unity in the soul attained by Eastern mystics, and the passion for unity in the life of the world, which is the natural expression of the inner vision. The teaching of Jesus is not a complete and final guide to the solution of all problems. We need the added insight of Eastern wisdom and Western science. But Jesus gives us, in his inspired intuitions, the essential principles of a world-religion which shall satisfy our deepest spiritual needs and our highest social aspirations.

Jesus stood for unity as a spiritual fact—he possessed himself, it would seem, the consciousness of unity with God, as a moral principle, expressed in the law of love, and as an ideal for the whole of human life, embodied in the vision of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. It has been brought as a reproach against Jesus by a modern Jewish writer, Joseph Klausner, that through his moral and spiritual emphasis, and through his consequent neglect of the formal and legal and external side of religion, he broke away from the traditions of his people, and overthrew the "barriers of nationality." That is precisely the achievement of Jesus: he "broke down the barriers of nationality," he stood for a larger, a universal outlook. It was his indifference to a narrowly "Jewish" righteousness which brought upon him the enmity of the Scribes and Pharisees. We know to-day that they were far from being the mere hypocritical formalists that we have commonly supposed them to have been. It was, indeed, the very distinguishing mark of the Pharisees that they believed with passionate intensity in the national faith. It was their thorough-going devotion to that faith which led them into conflict with Jesus. Jesus did not himself explicitly repudiate the authority of the Jewish Law; but he had the insight to recognise its insufficiency. He had the courage to proclaim a higher righteousness springing out of the deep inner sense of the unity of life. Whatever his conscious attitude towards the Law, he refused to accept its finality. To the Scribes and Pharisees, therefore, he was a revolutionary and a heretic, whose teaching threatened to undermine the very foundations of the established faith. At the end of his life the conflict was extended to the priests. Jesus entered the Temple courts and cast out the merchants and money-changers, whose Mammon-worship profaned them. His action was a deliberate challenge to the power, the prestige, the vested interests of the priests. And it led directly to his death on the Cross. For thereafter, as we

read, "the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might destroy him."

Jesus lived and died as a prophet and pioneer of that free religion of the spirit which in principle is universal, which rests, not on any external revelation, but on the presence in our souls of that deep inner life which makes us one. It is the greatness of Jesus that he leads us away from what is local and temporary and accidental to the inner and essential realities of life. In the expression of his teaching, it is true, ideas and beliefs are found which belong to what is for us an outgrown stage of thought. But the outstanding fact is the extent to which he leads us to what is abiding and universal. In their own measure that is true of all the great prophets of world-religion. The characteristic weakness of all historic faiths is their narrowness and limitation. As they have developed, and become increasingly complex in theology, in ritual, in organisation, they have become more and more divergent from one another. Yet in every case the ultimate root of their inmost teaching is the same. The ultimate root from which their essential teaching springs is the intuition of the unity of being beneath and beyond the surface of life, calling for realisation in the mind and heart of man, calling for expression in our life.

CHAPTER VII

THE GOAL OF RELIGION

FROM the first religion is a unifying force. The sense of sacredness for which it stands is a thing which men always share in common with some group, some community, some church, some seen or unseen body of companions. A religion, identifying itself with a particular conception of the sacred, may be intensely intolerant and exclusive; it may be a profoundly divisive power. But always within the bounds of its own creed it draws men into fellowship. Everywhere reverence and devotion go hand in hand with love and the sense of unity. Religion makes by its essential impulse for the unification of life. But commonly men's vision is so limited, the object of reverence is so restricted, so narrow, so external, that the sense of unity is confined within an extremely narrow range. Even when the great step forward in religious evolution has taken place, and men have come to recognise, as they do in all the more developed forms of religion, that the ultimate Power or principle of the world is one,—even then they still find it possible so to limit the object of their reverence, so to externalise the Deity they adore, so to separate between God and the life of the world, that they can worship God and blaspheme humanity; they can bow down before the greatness of God and deny the universal divinity of the human spirit; they can love God and hate or despise or persecute their fellow-men. For all the greatest seers, in the measure of their insight, this externality, this separation, is done away. They do not first love God and then as a secondary consequence love their fellows. They love God

in their fellows; their worship and love of God find direct and necessary expression in the spirit of reverence and love for humanity. Religion is for them (in Younghusband's words) " a patriotic love of country extended to the universe at large, a sense of oneness with all living things from which must flow a universal love."

In all the great religions of the world there have been mystics; and the basic fact of mysticism everywhere is the sense of an all-pervading Unity. The mystic consciousness, says Edward Carpenter, is " the realisation of an altogether vaster self than that to which we are accustomed." To share that consciousness is " to find that the 'I,' one's real, most intimate self, pervades the universe and all other beings—that the mountains and the sea and the stars are a part of one's body, and that one's soul is in touch with the souls of all creatures." It is to " become aware of your real self as pervading the life of other creatures, and moving in other bodies than your own." The mystic has made the great discovery that his own immediate, personal self is not the frontier of his being, that it is part of a greater, deeper Self which is fathomless and universal. That discovery is profoundly significant, because it has been arrived at along so many different roads. There have been mystics in many different ages and many different lands. They have differed, naturally, in the intellectual expression of their experience. In some respects they have, in general, simply accepted the beliefs characteristic of the time and place in which they lived. That is what we should expect from the very nature of the case. However great his own spiritual illumination, no man can escape the influence of his mental environment. The Hindu, the Chinese, the Persian mystic would naturally express his vision in other terms than those of Dante or St. Teresa. But the really significant thing about the mystics is not the diversity of their thought, but the unity of their intuition. Aldous Huxley has said that " the intuitions which different

human beings have had about the nature of God are irreconcilably different"—men have perceived their God in scores of different ways. The fact is, that men have *conceived* their God in many different ways, that their ideas about His nature are often quite irreconcilable; but these differing conceptions, these ideas, have not arisen directly out of any immediate intuition. So far as the mystic vision comes into play, men are lifted into a fundamental unity. However they may express it, whatever theological terms they may employ, the essential fact which they perceive is their own oneness with the divine. "Simple people (said Eckhart, the German mystic of the fourteenth century) conceive that we are to see God as if He stood on that side and we on this. It is not so: God and I are one in the act of my perceiving Him."

Eckhart was a Catholic of the Middle Ages; yet his vision was in essence the same as that of the Indian seer of the Bhagavad-Gita, who said,

> "There is true knowledge. Learn thou it is this:
> To see one changeless Life in all the lives,
> And in the separate one Inseparable."

And the vision of both is one with the intuition of the modern poet:

> "What thing dost thou now,
> Looking Godward, to cry,
> 'I am I, thou art thou,
> I am low, thou art high'?
> I am thou whom thou seekest to find him; find thou but thyself, thou art I."

It is sometimes suggested that fundamentally the mystic vision is unethical. If God is in all things, it is said, are not all equally divine? If (in the words of Kabir) "all the men and women of the world are His living forms," where is the basis of distinction between them? Where is the ground of aspiration and effort? What is the impulse towards the betterment of life? The objection rests in reality on an

essential misunderstanding. For God, as the mystic sees Him, is not only the universal energy which throbs and pulses in all, which is present alike in all forms of existence (in stones and trees and men): He is the height and depth of being, the ineffable Reality, of whom the mystic says, "There are no words to tell that which He is." The more fully we take possession of our own being, the more truly we apprehend the greatness of our own spirit,—the nearer we approach to the secret of universal Life, the more fully we are one with God. There is an immeasurable difference between men in the depth and range of their personality, in the degree to which they are at one with the inner forces of life. "So long as a man clamours for the 'I' and the 'mine' (said Kabir), his words are as naught." If we are to be one with God, we must "merge our life in the Ocean of Life," through that love which enlarges the bounds of our being, through that living fellowship whereby we see "all creatures on earth as our own self." So far is it from being true that this vision of the oneness of man with the Universal Spirit is unethical, that it provides in fact the only possible basis for our highest aspirations. There is no greater and nobler ideal than that of the practical realisation of oneness with the Spirit which is the inmost Life of all—the ideal of "the liberated self which re-discovers itself in all other souls." It is the greatness to-day of the Indian Christ, Mahatma Gandhi, that in him this ideal is so fully expressed—that he has made himself so largely one with the Spirit, by his boundless love, by his measureless sympathy, by his passionate realisation of oneness with all who suffer, with all who are oppressed and downtrodden and despised.

The great mystics are themselves, in their own life and consciousness, the highest fruit of religion. They represent (as Mr. Middleton Murry has said of Jesus) a new type of man. They are precursors of a new humanity. What they have attained is a life at one with the Spirit of the universe, a new

mode of consciousness and a new unity and harmony and wholeness of being, prefigured by religion everywhere. They foreshadow a new and unified humanity, a state of being in which we are no longer discordant units, but conscious parts of a greater Life—a state of being in which the human soul is at one with itself, at one with life, at one with God.

The life of the world to-day is torn asunder by the war of conflicting interests, by the strife of warring classes and business groups and nationalities. It is this disorder, this disunity in the political and economic life of mankind, which lies at the root of our social problems. And this division in the outer life is the reflection of an inner discord. It is the reflection of disunity in the inner life, of the war of conflicting motives and purposes and desires, of the sense of separation from the life and the interests of our fellows. In early times men lived together, within the limits of their small social groups, on a basis of unity and comradeship. They lived in harmony with their fellow-clansmen. And they lived in harmony also—in unconscious and spontaneous harmony—with the forces of life within themselves. For us this unity of the inner and outer life has gone. We have lost the primitive, instinctive, unconscious solidarity; we have not yet won the larger consciousness, the wider unity, the deeper harmony, which is our goal. It is for the larger vision that religion stands at its deepest and truest—for the sense of unity with all souls and all lives in the greater Life and Spirit. Such religion is rootedly hostile to the existing order of the world. If it is genuinely applied to life, it stands, not for any mere adjustment of conflicting interests, not for any superficial harmony of opposed forces, but for the radical reconstruction of economic and international relationships, for the rebuilding of the life of the world on a new and co-operative basis. From the standpoint of a religion which is true to its own principles the task which lies before us is that of creating in the nation and in the world a new and unified society.

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